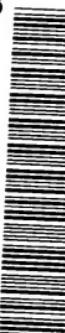


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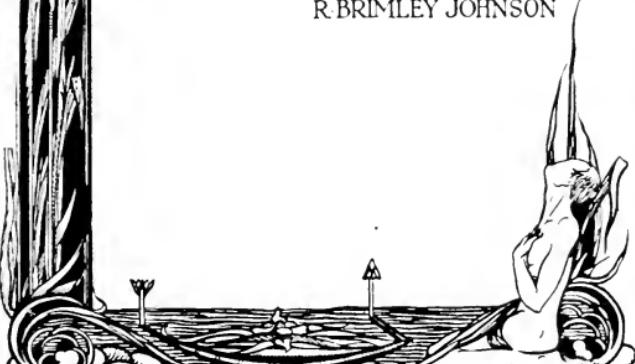


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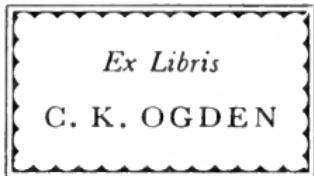
OUT OF MY  
KEEPING &  
A CHARACTER

BY  
R BRIMLEY JOHNSON



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# OUT OF MY KEEPING

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# OUT OF MY KEEPING & A CHARACTER

BY

R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON

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L. B. J.  
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Out of my keeping, my heart,  
Given my Lady, that day  
She looked my way,  
Never again to part.  
Not mine, yet more to me far  
Than when it was free, as they say,  
To light where it may.  
In her keeping it rose like a star,  
Shining eternal in skies  
Where a man in his pride may pray  
To be shown the Way:  
Reading the look in her eyes  
As she came to me, I who was blind,  
And afraid, and astray  
Like a child whose play  
Is cheeked by a word unkind.  
Can I tell you what lovers are?  
Who shall give me a poet's art,  
When the words are so hard to find—  
How I won and treasured God's prize?

*In the sunlight, when his eyes are bent on the future, radiant of possibilities, with a good fight before him and a good friend at his right hand ; when—despite trouble, physical suffering, or anxiety—the world is taking shape at his feet almost quickly enough for his vivid impatience ; when all things are bearing new and beautiful meanings, and all men gaining new and beautiful powers ; when the spiritual reality of life is caught hold of : man is himself,*

*What we call death is in no sense an end of anything.*

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### I

Since it is true, Beloved, let me speak,  
The truth is best for all the world to hear.  
I know you would not have me praise you,  
dear,  
Or give you honour that you would not seek ;  
Like to a man adventuring the peak  
O'ertopping all around, whose goal is clear,  
Intent to climb, though there are none to  
cheer.  
And true it is, for worship words are weak.

You gave to me a treasure none can share—  
Not to be measured in a balance fine  
Nor pictured by an artist's patient line ;  
A secret, making all the world seem fair,  
None may possess who do not greatly dare,  
The miracle that you are ever mine.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### II

It is not joy a man would idly shout,  
His laughter echoing through the crowded  
street,  
Like some gay tale that merry tongues repeat,  
When glare and riot melancholy rout,  
And songs make hearts that listen stout  
To do and dare, as they defy defeat ;  
When youths in spring, like dauntless warriors,  
greet  
Their gallant comrades free from care and  
doubt.

It is not courage cold, but calm and strong,  
That having suffered will not yet despair,  
But plods the world in faith, unflinching, rare,  
Though hope is dead, and life seems dark and  
long ;  
When none rise up to battle with the wrong,  
And honest men for silent death prepare.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### III

No, Love has colour, warmth, and depth untold,  
A steady fire growing in man's veins  
That, slow or quick to kindle, never wanes ;  
For ever young, yet in its wisdom old,  
That needs no lock its golden links to hold.  
Take all I have ; if only Love remains  
I am not poor. No penalties or pains  
Can steal or dim my treasure. Love is bold.

Its meaning hidden in the thoughts of two,  
Who cannot tell the story of a heart  
They share, each owning every part.  
No more am I myself in love, but you.  
The mystery men sing, we know is true ;  
The light is shining, past a painter's art.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### IV

Glory and splendour of life, looking out of your eyes, [ God,  
Up to the peak, star-circled, old neighbour of With his snow-white hair, and his rugged sides untrod ; [ rise ;  
The murmur of waves eternal ; the tides that The flame in the heart of the sun, each morn's surprise ; [ furrowed sod ;  
Heather and gorse, green fields, and the Riding a mettled steed, fleet-footed, well-shod,  
On an open road round the world, under deep blue skies.

Song of the air in the storm or the hush ; bird-notes ; [ that peep  
The rustle of leaves ; life's hum ; the flowers From the grass, of a myriad hues, sun-kissed out of sleep ; [ goats ;  
The cattle content to browse, the skipping of Water that leaps and falls ; or loiters in moats ;  
The seed that the husbandmen sow, and the corn they reap.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### V

Your spirit lit by tales from olden days—  
The Quest, the Grail, Crusades, and Chivalry—  
Of heroes, venturing over land and sea,  
Servants of God or Beauty's Knights, whose ways  
Are hard; the faith of him who best obeys  
The Call to rise and set the captive free,  
To help the weak—compelling liberty—  
To find new lands, to sing new songs, to praise.

The dreams that cheer the lives of little men,  
The simple meanings of a happy home,  
The joys of those who work, and those who  
roam  
No further than the lane, the wood, the fen,  
The wonders children know, outside our ken,  
Dancing with fairies, fearful of a gnome.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### VI

'Tis she I love. Yet have I answered why.  
To those that question—is your lady fair,  
More fair than all? The sunshine in her hair  
More bright? Her voice more musical? Her  
sigh  
More tender? Say, what shall we know her by?  
I cannot tell, although I speak with care  
(Or if I could, I know not I would dare)  
Wherein her gifts to merit loving lie.

I only know that I am glad to live  
Because she lives, the woman at my side,  
Her promise given, for all time my bride.  
She hath so much, of priceless worth, to give.  
My Queen, and I her sole executive,  
Whose perfect trust in me bestoweth pride.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### VII

At times I think one look on her told all  
The mystery of a man in the great light  
A woman sheds, that banishes the night  
Of fear and darkness, as he stands up, tall  
Above his fellows, never more to fall

To littleness ; new knowledge his of right.

New faith, new hope, new joy, a vision bright,  
Days given to service, when his love doth call.

And yet each hour, from out her heart of gold,  
Ten thousand marvels, each surpassing each :  
I had so much to learn, and she to teach :  
A nobler meaning and a stronger hold  
Of life, and thoughts and feelings none have  
told,  
As countless as the pebbles on the beach.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### VIII

Together, knit together, are we now  
Upstanding, bravely marching, hand in hand  
To unknown dangers, and an unknown land.  
My lady, let me hear again the vow  
That gave me you, for still I wonder how  
You came so certainly to understand;  
You might accept the symbol, that gold band  
We use to mark our mating, I and thou.

For you have chosen me, on whom to spend  
The treasure none might share, until I came  
To ask of you—what Love alone may claim—  
To be my lover and my perfect friend;  
The day, for me you made of Self an end,  
And bade me be another, yet the same.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### IX

It is not beauty, spread from sea to sky,  
Nor riches buried deep beneath the earth,  
Nor many friends that cheer with honest  
mirth,  
Nor health and strength all trouble to defy ;  
It is not feats whereat the groundlings cry,  
Nor prizes that to jealousy give birth,  
I crave—though, shared with thee, of double  
worth :  
They please me not ; no need to ask me why.

It is because I want you, lady, here,  
Alone beside me, never thence to stray :  
I would be always telling, if I may,  
The old, new, tale—of how I hold you dear  
(That only can be told when none are near),  
Of spells you weave for ever and a day.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### X

They know not love's best gifts who have not  
been

Together through the constant changing years  
Of youth to whom a glorious world appears  
For conquest, days to come of rapture keen ;  
Through hours that teach us all our sorrows  
mean.

In sharing sharp, yet freed from crippling fears  
And cold despair ; till memory endears  
The harvest gathered—all that we have seen.

The talk of lovers, free and unafraid :

The message carried in a lover's eye—

(Thoughts winged more swift than any bird  
can fly) :

The greetings, brave and intimate, conveyed

When loving hand on lover's hand is laid :

The languages they love each other by.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### XI

And every little thing we did was best  
Because we did it, she and I. No way  
But hers could please me. Neither work nor  
play

Without her smile, could I pursue with zest :  
Her happiness in all, my eager quest.

How dear the little things she used each day  
And made her own ! King's ransom could  
not pay

The price to me of aught that we possessed.

And she herself to me beyond compare  
Grown daily dearer and more precious far—  
The form beloved no lines of pain could mar—  
Her gallant eyes, her tender-feeling hair,  
My daily study, food for jealous care,  
A song of joy and proud possession are.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### XII

'Twas then I knew the fire of passion's ache  
The body of my Lady to possess :  
The summit of her trustful lovingness,  
That giveth all for very loving's sake,  
Not lightly snatched like play that wantons  
make,  
But rather held as one who doth confess  
Him dedicate to her ; that Love may bless  
The bond they have adventured—naught can  
break.

There is no greater thing to give than this,  
The final pledge and seal of self forgot,  
The perfect trust of joy that feareth not,  
The wonder that is born within a kiss ;  
Which to deny or combat were to miss  
The pure white page of life, without a blot.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### XIII

And now ! what was may never be again :

My Lady hath slipped from me through the  
Gate

Of Death, to darkness none can penetrate.

With hands outstretched and eyes that search  
in vain,

I wander through a wilderness of pain,

Where life, and light, and hope all cry "too  
late."

Dare I, forsaken, read the book of fate,  
Or have I faith to see the future plain ?

For God has taken from me all He gave.

My Lady hath no eyes, to find the track  
She took with Death, no feet to bring her  
back,

No hands to grope a pathway from the grave ;  
I may not climb her lonely steps to save,  
She may not stoop to bring me all I lack.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### XIV

My part, how long, the path we tread to tread  
Alone, resolved to carry on for thee  
The work we planned and lived for, loyally ;  
So poor a thing I offer in thy stead ;  
Yet must I live for thee, though thou art dead.  
My will, your servant, hath no power for me,  
I stumble like a man who cannot see ;  
To fail, prove false to thee, a haunting dread.

And all the dear familiar ways of life  
Reproach me with their treasured meanings  
lost,  
Like flowers hidden by a nipping frost ;  
No strength to live, no courage for the strife,  
Since home is homeless, waiting for the wife,  
And no unshared adventure worth its cost.

## OUT OF MY KEEPING

### XV

Yet Love and Faith shall bring a braver thought :  
She is not dead, she hath not left my side,  
Once more together through God's house we  
ride :

The vision seen we, strong in loving, sought,  
The lesson learnt, that love itself hath taught,  
The certainty that may not be denied  
How even Death is conquered and defied,  
The miracle immortal love hath wrought.

For two made one God will not suffer part,  
Somewhere, some way, we hold on each to  
each,  
Her new strange life my love, to help, may  
reach,  
Her love can enter my deserted heart ;  
Although we droop and falter at the start,  
We have Good News, for all who mourn, to  
preach.



## A CHARACTER

LOVE.—Always ready, but not lightly given ; once bestowed, never withdrawn ; not denied, even when met with cruelty, indifference, or ingratitude. Constant, supremely loyal, sacrificing of all self-interests ; watchful with infinite care, tender understanding, and wise insight.

Loyal alike : to those who bore her, whether or no they had earned thanks, yet not dutifully but by loving impulse ; to those of her childhood's home, wherever wandering ; to the child she bore, through much tribulation.

Drawing to her : the mother of little ones to whose nursery-days she brought sunshine, whose young health and happiness she made safe ; holy sisters who laboured patiently among stumbling women ; and some who had themselves strayed for lack of guidance, weaklings in the face of the world's cruelty. Her soul's strength finding a little happiness, and giving much.

## A CHARACTER

When one came to love and serve her, resting upon his chivalry, she had yet much to give : to her child, perfect friendship and patient self-sacrifice ; to other little ones, always trusting and clinging to her, the playfellow spirit of a mother's joy in her babe's coaxing laughter and in the unending wonder of young hearts ; to the few who could read it, a message of hidden valour, strength, and purity. Often, too, the passer-by winning her quick sympathy, would prove an hour's friend, and carry away the memory of her rare nature ; reawakened, maybe, by a chance word after many years.

To one repenting, she gave the supreme forgiveness possible to good women. But there was no weakness in the bestowal, no lowering of her demand for purity, no lessening her hatred of sin ; only a tender trusting to the best which her faith strengthened one to attain.

So much had her heart to give ; so few were there to guess its riches. Yet maybe such loyal

## A CHARACTER

devotion could not be spent on many. For the chosen it meant all ; even in chance encounter it bore rare fruit.

**COURAGE AND JOY.** -There was great strength in that lonely spirit. Bodily ill-equipped, almost every way, for adventure ; scarcely knowing a child's joy ; born to battle with life ; unguided and untaught ; she had in herself the true wander-spirit, the inexhaustible thirst for Beauty, God-or man-made, the artist's passion, the lover's gallantry. Often in pain, the flesh was weak ; hurt and puzzled by man's ill-doing, the heart was wounded ; yet her spirit flagged not. With but small opportunity, with little wealth to smooth her path or given knowledge to guide her mind, she was ever striving after the best in all things, the great, the distant, the ideal. She would be seeing all of God's world she could strain after, all man's genius she could puzzle out. Her walk was ever uphill, eager to reach the top, to look on new lands ; never sparing herself in the

## A CHARACTER

seeking, nor putting comfort before conquest. Everything she found for herself, and made her own.

Always adventuring, she yet gained the uttermost by the way, with fearless independence and keen delight. Hers was not intolerance of imperfection, the arrogance that will be always in exaltation. She could find gaiety in very small happinesses, very simple beauty. She could rejoice with the young, the ignorant, and the weak. Never missing the flower in her path, to discover was her delight.

The utter realness and sincerity of her nature, her strong purity and high aim, gave her a power of true happiness few ever achieve; to share which, absolutely as she could and did let one share it, was a privilege of enduring worth. Her claim from us of high endeavour shone ahead like a victor's crown, guiding the unsteady feet, cheering the doubtful heart, bracing the weak will.

## A CHARACTER

BEATING AGAINST THE BARS.—There was in her something of the caged bird, that would fly further, lead a fuller life. Clearly seeing and feeling deeply, she lost some of the crumbs life offers to easier souls. There was excess of strain over the trivial, nothing taken at ease: literally *all* must be done well, and she had such little things to do. It seemed a waste of her, and a purposeless wearing out; her remorseless standard of well-doing as house-lady; the pains she gave to domesticities, of use or ornament; tasks she hated, yet did so wisely well. Vain, too, at least for her own reaping, the daily thought of giving up, the constant planning to put by: part pride in self-reliance, part provision for a rainy day, or to enjoy at the coming of a care-free life.

Of infinite patience after rebuff, striving again and again towards all fate snatched from her, she was yet, in the monotony of the daily task, a born rebel, hating all rule and

## A CHARACTER

posing and herd-natures pasturing on “what is done.”

Pitching her aim too high for ease or comfort, she beat and bruised herself, in impatient fury with time and space, and the body that is for ever lagging behind all we would be and do. Baffled, indeed, she would rage at the day's pettiness, so that some would judge her hasty, unreasoning, prone to quarrel and grumbling. Too often her self was hidden, even from those she loved, in the storm life meant for her. She could scarcely tolerate half-measures, the half-hearted in joy or goodness, spiritually or even mentally indifferent; with her none might live on the surface. She could love a weakling, but seldom forgive weakness. Where she had trusted and hoped much, she could ill bear disappointment. Ever on the alert, her idealism often sprang out in words of hate; her very love aflame, burning away her wounded spirit, hurting, bewildering those that loved her, over whose

## A CHARACTER

“wrongness somewhere” her heart ached. Whence, alas, at times over-hasty condemnation, needless misunderstanding.

**SORROW AND SUFFERING.**—That security in happiness, surely hers by right since her life was giving, she never gained. Fate seemed always cruel: disaster in all outward happenings dogged her footsteps. Though she faced, and could throw off, the spectre, it came back, again and again, to the end; till, if content and rest seemed near, she would say “Such happiness is not for me.” Pain, suffering, and death lingered at her side. When she had won her own, her best beloved at her side, disease held her back, in its iron grip, from the wonder of the world she had so bravely conquered. The body’s powers regained, poverty robbed health’s gift; anxieties, brought by love, held sway.

It was the haunting sense of world-wickedness—the hate-spell of the War—that broke her spirit at last; which, till then, never failed her. Else,

## A CHARACTER

at the dawn of life's fulfilling, she had not faltered before the last fight, yielded to fear, and with her vision clouded, turned from the beacon of hope. Nor had her heart been stilled, almost without a struggle, in very sight of its goal.

Yet all was not dark, and there is light beyond. She held, and prized, God's best gift to man. And if the Great Adventure has taken her unawares, hurried her away from us, she will face it. And she will not forget, as we remember ; God does not part those who love.

Invisible ; yet nearer to our thoughts,

A living heart to heart more closely linked

In stronger union ; since the spirit speaks

To spirit, all untrammelled by the form

Of words, interpretation of the eye,

Or cruel time that tears us from our love,

The while we hide the thought we would express

Midst weeds that choke the flower-soul God-sown.

God take my love, and lay it at her feet ;

To her, alone in realms by man untrod,

A stranger to the brighter light, permit

The dear familiar presence of my thoughts,

So still her courtier, widowed I may live,

And to a widow'd spirit dedicate.

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